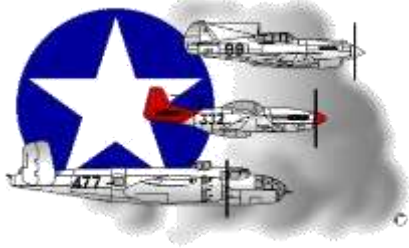


# BIOGRAPHY



## A DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

Tuskegee Airmen Inc. Public Relations, P.O. Box 830060  
Tuskegee, AL 36083

# WILLIAM HANDY ACCOO



William H. Accoo, affectionately known as “Bill,” was born on 14 October 1914 in Salem, New Jersey to Clarke and Florence Accoo. He was the youngest of nine children and attended the Salem City Public School System.

On 23 February 1942, Bill was inducted into the Army. He went to Tuskegee, Alabama and became part of the 332d Fighter Group, 99th Fighter Squadron as a Crew Chief. Earning the rank of Staff Sergeant (SSG), SSG Accoo served in the European (Italy) and North African theaters during World War II. After serving, he returned home 25 August 1945 to live with his parents. Shortly thereafter, he met the love of his life, Ida Mae Mitchell, a popular school teacher in Bridgeton, NJ.

They were married in the parsonage of Mt. Teman African Methodist Episcopal Church in Elizabeth, NJ, on 31 August 1946 and raised their children in Salem, New Jersey. They were married for 62 years.

SSG Accoo was employed for 26 years with A. W. Davis Lumber Company until the business closed its doors. He was then employed by Mannington Mills, Salem, New Jersey until his retirement in 1980.

Mr. Accoo was a member of Mt. Hope United Methodist Church, where he worked faithfully and diligently. He served as church Treasurer for 22 years and President of the Administrative Board for 21 years. After a fire at the Church, he oversaw restoration of the Sanctuary and Sunday school room.

As a community activist and civic leader, Mr. Accoo became the first Commander of American Legion Post 444. In 1963, he became the first Black person to serve on the Salem City Council, a post he held until 1966. Mr. Accoo was also a Welfare Officer in Civil Defense. He served four years on the Board of Directors for the Guidance Center, 12 years on the Board of Directors for the local YMCA, and 21 years on the Board of Directors of the United Way. He also served on the Mayor’s Task Force and was affiliated with the Community Action Group and he organized and worked with the youth group called the "Valiants" for 2 years. As a member of the Townsmen Social Club, he served as President, Treasurer and Chairman of the Entertainment Committee.

After his retirement, he became an active member of Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., representing the Tuskegee Airmen at social gatherings, sharing the great achievements and the impact of Black Americans serving in the armed forces. Mr. Accoo was presented his Congressional Gold Medal by Congressman Frank LoBiondo on 25 May 2007 in a special ceremony at the old courthouse in Salem, New Jersey.



Mr. Accoo's favorite saying was that "life should be filled with loving, caring and sharing". He loved his wife, Ida, his family and his church.

Mr. Accoo's military education: unknown

Mr. Accoo's civilian education: unknown

Mr. Accoo's military awards include: European-African-Middle Eastern Service Medal, Good Conduct Metal.

Mr. Accoo's civic awards, memberships, and honors: unknown

Mr. Accoo died 27 August 2008. He was 93 years old. His wife Ida Mitchell Accoo died in 2015. He is survived by daughter Shelly Turner (Shawn), grandchildren Shakira Parson, Aida Davis and Rollin Davis and his great-grandson Ziyon Moore. Mr. Accoo is buried in the Salem County War Veteran's Memorial Park and Cemetery, Pilesgrove, New Jersey, Plot E2-A13, Memorial ID - 50930720.

